

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2001

The Honorable Dale Bosworth  
Chief of the Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Bosworth:

We are writing in support of Forest Service thinning of Late Successional Reserves (LSRs) in the Pacific Northwest. As you know, large LSRs were established in the Northwest Forest Plan of 1993. At that time, some of us voiced strong reservations about simply drawing lines around previously harvested tree plantations without addressing the reserves' long term management needs. These reserves can play an important role in regenerating late successional forest conditions, but they need to be effectively managed to achieve that goal.

Researchers from throughout the northwest, along with Regional Forester Harv Forsgren and district rangers, are conducting crucial research on the effects of LSR thinning on forest ecology. In the untreated LSRs, trees stand at a density of about two hundred to four hundred per acre. Most trees are less than ten inches in diameter, and lack full, healthy crowns. In addition, the forest is nearly devoid of under-story foliage. The lack of sunlight and nutrients reaching the forest floor has created a "biological desert" where there should be species of hemlock, maple, alder, salmonberry, and numerous other plants. By contrast, the study areas that have been thinned to approximately sixty trees per acre show signs of a healthy, functioning forest with larger trees, greater crowns, and a diverse collection of vegetation. In yet another area, where scientists have thinned to thirty trees per acre, the forest appears to be developing real characteristics of an old growth forest.

We are interested in taking steps to help the Forest Service use thinning to create healthy, viable LSRs. To help us better understand the needs of the Forest Service in this regard, we are requesting the following:

- How many total acres within Region 6 LSRs should be thinned? Over what period of time should the thinning be completed?
- How many acres within Region 6 LSRs should be thinned within five years?
- How many acres are scheduled to be thinned under current budget projections?

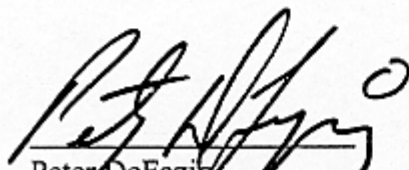
- How much of a budget increase is needed to complete necessary thinning within LSRs?
- How many board feet of marketable timber will be produced by thinning for forest health and diversity within LSRs?
- What are the biological benefits of thinning LSRs to desired trees per acre ratio?
- What is the biological result if LSR thinning is not completed? What is the result if LSRs are thinned beyond the "window of opportunity"?
- What effect might the current reorganizing of regional Forest Service staff have on the agency's ability to complete LSR thinning?
- What are the economic and ecological results of contracting the harvests and selling timber in Forest Service run sort-yards?

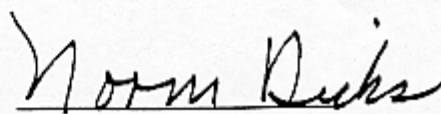
The goal of LSR thinning should be the restoration of late successional forests. Marketable timber is an incidental result. We are also interested in the feasibility of establishing sort-yards as a means of marketing the wood by-product of LSR thinning. Contracting the logging operation without selling the standing trees will achieve a more suitable thin, and help alleviate some concerns about LSR thinning. Sort-yards will allow the Forest Service to decide what trees are to be removed to achieve the greatest ecological benefit, and eliminate any direct financial interest by one party in the size and species of harvested trees. Once in the yard, the trees can be sorted by size and species and auctioned off to the highest bidder. The private sector has run similar sort-yards for years to bring about the maximum utilization of trees harvested and maximum returns.

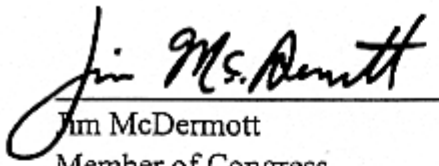
Given the immediate need to thin LSRs to promote long term health and diversity, we are confident that Forest Service, timber, and environmental interests can work together to achieve this common goal. Contract thinning for forest health and the use of sort-yards could create a win-win situation for all.

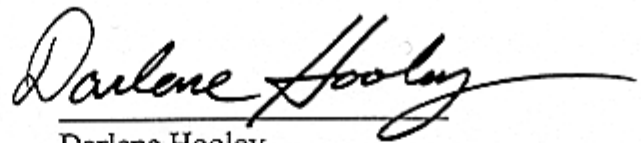
Thank you for your attention to this issue. We look forward to working with you in the future.

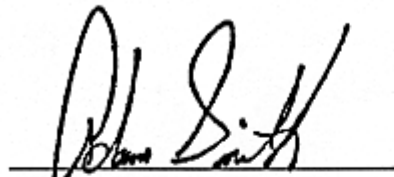
Sincerely,


  
 Peter DeFazio  
 Member of Congress

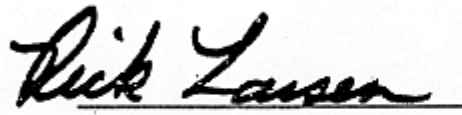
  
 Norm Dicks  
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Darlene Hooley  
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